# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Natural Resources manages over 1.6 million acres on behalf of state residents to provide a diversity of recreational experiences and meet a variety of ecological needs. Using information and input from many sources, the department makes ongoing decisions about what types of recreation opportunities to provide at different properties to meet its goal of providing high quality outdoor experiences for residents and visitors.

To ensure that the department is providing high quality recreation experiences at places well-suited to support these uses, the agency compiled this Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) to bring together information and the public's ideas on:

- Current recreation opportunities
- Existing gaps and needs
- Department-managed properties that may be well-suited to help address these needs

To be sure, department-managed lands are only one potential solution to meeting recreation needs; our partners in the private sector and governments from local to federal levels all play important roles in helping provide outdoor recreation opportunities in Wisconsin. In many cases and for many reasons, the properties that the department manages simply may not be "good fits" to meet important needs.

The results of the ROA are intended to inform and streamline the department's master planning process. By identifying the department-managed properties that are potentially well-suited to meet recreation needs, the results of the ROA will allow department staff and the public to focus on the subset of recreation opportunities needed in the region that the property can meaningfully address.

The department started the analysis process by assembling leaders of statewide recreation organizations to provide insights and expertise about a range of recreation activities that occur on department and other public lands in Wisconsin. This group, known as the Statewide Stakeholders Team, provided critical information on recreation needs in the state (both in terms of existing gaps and the conditions that make for high-quality experiences) and how the department can help meet these needs. In addition, the Team has been instrumental in identifying ways for diverse recreation interests to work together to maximize benefits while minimizing impacts.

Because recreation opportunities and demands vary across the state, the ROA divides the state into eight regions. These are the same regions identified and used in previous Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP). The department initiated the ROA process in the Northwoods Region in spring of 2017, and proceeded to complete the rest of the regions in the state through the spring of 2018.

The DNR manages over 1.6 million acres on behalf of state residents.

The purpose of the ROA is to ensure that the DNR is providing high-quality recreation opportunities in the most effective places.

Factors considered in identifying potential properties that might be "good fits" to help meet recreation needs:

- Statutory requirements
- Funding sources and restrictions
- · Existing uses
- · Physical attributes
- Landscape context
- · Social needs and requests



### NORTHWOODS REGION

With an abundance of public conservation lands, the nine-county Northwoods Region has been an outdoor recreation destination for generations of families dating back to Wisconsin's earliest days. A wide range of recreation opportunities are currently provided in the region – from quiet wilderness areas and no-motor lakes to modern campgrounds with hot showers to developed mountain biking trails and thousands of miles of snowmobile trails.

The department sought public input on existing recreation participation and recreation opportunities that are in demand. Over 2,700 people provided input covering a variety of topics.

The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Northwoods Region. A brief summary is provided here.



### NORTHERN HIGHLAND AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST

- More **paved bike trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages to each other and campgrounds. Also, potentially create loop trails.
- More mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- ATV/UTV riding on forest roads that are already currently open to street-legal
  vehicles to provide linkages in regional trail/route networks and to provide access
  during the fall hunting season.
- **Off highway motorcycle riding** on forest roads that are already currently open to street-legal vehicles to provide linkages in regional trail/route networks.
- Camping. Consider adding electric hook-ups at some campgrounds or significant
  portions of campgrounds and creating quiet campgrounds where generators would
  be limited, as well as adding more group campgrounds.

# State Wildlife Areas, Fishery Areas, Rearing Stations, and Natural Areas

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths.
- Some limited opportunities to provide mountain biking trails.
- ATV/UTV riding and motorcycle riding on roads that connect regional trail/route networks.
- Some limited opportunities to provide **primitive and rustic camping** opportunities.
- Additional **boat launches** at strategic locations to facilitate access to key waters.

# FLOWAGES (SCENIC WATERS AREAS)

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths.
- ATV/UTV riding and motorcycle riding on roads that connect regional trail/route networks.
- Opportunities to provide more **primitive and rustic camping opportunities**.

## STATE PARKS AND TRAILS

- Allow or expand **ATV/UTV riding and motorcycle riding** opportunities to help connect regional trail/route networks.
- Some options to add to the existing camping and bicycling opportunities at Council Grounds State Park.

A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- · Trails for motorized recreation
- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Campgrounds both rustic and developed
- Larger populations of big game species

- ATV/UTV riding
- Bicycling paved trails
- $\bullet \qquad \text{Bicycling} \text{mountain biking, single} \\ \text{track}$
- Camping tent
- · Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Fishing from shore
- Fishing ice fishing
- Harvesting berries, mushrooms, etc.
- Hiking, walking and running on trails
- Motorboating
- Snowmobiling
- Swimming
- Wildlife/bird watching

# UPPER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

The Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Region has been an outdoor recreation destination for those looking for a mix of developed recreation facilities, Great Lakes scenery, and remote excursions. The state parks in the region are among the highest visited in the state, plus hunting and fishing opportunities are world-class. A wide range of recreation opportunities are currently provided in the region, from quiet wilderness areas to modern campgrounds with amenities to developed mountain biking trails and miles and miles of snowmobile trails.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, a few needs were expressed by the over 1,500 respondents to the public input opportunity. The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Region. A brief summary is provided here.

## STATE PARKS AND FORESTS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop** trails of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages would likely be most popular.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Developed camping**, including adding electrified sites to some campgrounds or significant portions of campgrounds.
- **Primitive camping**, particularly at the large parks and forests.
- **Equestrian trails** that either connect a network and/or are loop trails contained wholly in the property.
- Walk-in trails to expand access to waterbodies with canoes or kayaks.
- **Developed boat access sites** to provide access to Lake Michigan and Green Bay.

## STATE WILDLIFE AREAS AND FISHERY AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations. These would be single-track, constructed trails of varying difficulties, including potentially "technical" skills areas.
- **Primitive camping** that would serve the hunter, wilderness adventurer and water recreationist.
- Walk-in trails to expand access to waterbodies with canoes or kayaks.



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- · Horseback riding opportunities
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds

- Bicycling paved trails
- Bicycling mountain biking, single track
- Camping tent
- Camping RV/pop-up
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Hiking, walking, and running on trails
- Horseback riding
- Swimming
- · Wildlife/bird watching

## GREAT NORTHWEST REGION

The Great Northwest Region has been an outdoor recreation destination, particularly for those in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area, for decades. With over 2 million acres of public lands the region hosts a diverse set of long distance and loop trails, as well as plentiful hiking, hunting and motorized riding opportunities to escape into the wilderness.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, several needs were expressed by over 1,300 people who provided input. The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Great Northwest Region. A brief summary is provided here.

# STATE PARKS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- **Developed camping**, including adding electrified sites, as well as **primitive camping** to connect visitors to the lakes and rivers in the region.

# STATE TRAILS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- **Paved bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- ATV/UTV riding on roads that are already currently open to street-legal vehicles to provide linkages in regional trail/route networks and to provide access during the fall hunting season.
- Off-highway motorcycle riding and 4WD-vehicle driving on roads open to street-legal vehicles, with identification and signage of preferred routes to concentrate use in the most appropriate corridors.

### STATE FORESTS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- Surfaced trail and mountain biking trails to create new networks and destinations.
- ATV/UTV riding to create new connections for regional trail/route networks and to provide access during the fall hunting season.
- Off-highway motorcycle riding and 4WD-vehicle driving on roads open to street-legal vehicles, with identification and signage of preferred routes to concentrate use in the most appropriate corridors.
- **Developed & primitive camping**, including adding electrified sites to significant portions of campgrounds.
- Walk-in trails to **expand access to paddlers** seeking a whitewater rapids or peaceful float on the river.

### State Wildlife and Fishery Areas

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Mountain biking trails** that could provide single-track, constructed trails of varying difficulties.
- ATV/UTV riding on roads that are already currently open to street-legal vehicles to provide linkages in regional trail/route networks and to provide access during the fall hunting season.
- Primitive camping, allowing visitors to escape and surround themselves with the natural world.



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds
- Public shore access to lakes and streams
- Top activities that ROA input form respondents participate in include:
  - Bicycling paved trails
  - Bicycling mountain biking, single track
  - Camping tent
  - Canoeing/kayaking
  - Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
  - Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
  - Fishing from shore
  - Harvesting berries, mushrooms, etc.
  - Hiking, walking and running on trails
  - Swimming
  - Wildlife/bird watching

# LAKE WINNEBAGO WATERS REGION

The combination of the Lake Winnebago system with a growing urban population creates a recipe for growing recreational demand in the region. Water-related activities are plentiful, and simultaneously areas for potential growth. Fishing from lakes and rivers, along with canoeing and kayaking, were noted as key opportunities with potential to expand within the Lake Winnebago Waters Region.

Camping, both primitive and modern, as well as hiking on trails are both also in-demand activities in the region. Even with smaller blocks of public land compared to regions further north, there remain regional opportunities to accommodate these activities. Among 1,200 public input participants, the emphasis on non-motorized recreation is further demonstrated in strong participant responses for keeping all roads on DNR properties closed to motorized recreation.

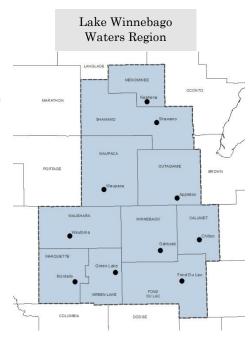
In general, the department believes the following areas provide additional opportunities for the growth of recreation opportunities in the Lake Winnebago Waters Region.

## STATE PARKS

- Surfaced bicycle trails that expand the existing network linking cities, villages and campgrounds.
- **Developed camping**, including adding electrified sites to some campgrounds or significant portions of campgrounds.
- **Primitive camping** to accommodate calmer, more primitive experiences.
- Developed hiking trails and wildlife viewing platforms.

### STATE WILDLIFE AND FISHERY AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- Walk-in trails to **expand access to waterbodies** with canoes or kayaks.
- Developed boat access sites to provide access to Lake Winnebago and its surrounding waters.
- Fishing docks and access sites to increase opportunities for fishers on streams, rivers and lakes.
- **Cross-country skiing trails** to support a network of trails for ambitious winter recreators.
- Developed **picnic areas** near parking areas.



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Horseback riding trails
- Trails for motorized recreation
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface

- ATV/UTV Riding
- Bicycling paved trails
- Camping tent
- Camping RV/pop-up
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kavak
- Hiking, walking and running on trails
- Horseback riding
- Wildlife/bird watching

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER CORRIDOR REGION

The topography and the riverine systems make the Mississippi River Corridor Region unique and draws a variety of outdoor recreationists, particularly for those in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metro Area. The many rivers draining to the Mississippi draw trout fisherman from throughout the Midwest. These same rivers also attract a growing sector of paddlers to the area while the hills and valleys are attractive to mountain bikers. With the high-quality habitat for game and non-game species, hunting opportunity remains high, as does wildlife viewing along the Mississippi flyway. Hosting a diverse set of regional linear and loop trails, the region could expand existing and create new trail areas.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, a variety needs were expressed by the 1,700 public input participants. The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Mississippi River Corridor Region. A brief summary is provided here.



## STATE PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded on existing trails.
- **Developed camping**, including adding electrified sites.
- **Primitive camping** to connect visitors to the lakes and rivers in the region.
- **Picnic areas** and **wildlife viewing areas** could be developed to meet the demand of day-users.
- Walk-in access to waterways for canoe/kayak users could be developed.

# STATE TRAILS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded.
- **Paved bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Primitive camping** to enable trail users to take multi-day trips.
- Picnic areas could be developed or expanded at trailhead areas.

### STATE FORESTRY PROPERTIES

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities.
- **Picnic areas** and **wildlife viewing areas** could be developed in areas not interrupting forestry operations.
- **Primitive camping**, allowing visitors to escape and surround themselves with the natural world.

### STATE WILDLIFE AND FISHERY AREAS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded on existing trails
- Primitive camping, allowing visitors to escape and surround themselves with the natural world.
- Walk-in access to waterways for canoe/kayak users could be developed.

A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds
- Public shore access to lakes and streams

- Bicycling paved trails
- Bicycling mountain biking, single track
- Bicycling winter/fat tire
- Camping tent
- · Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Fishing from shore
- Harvesting berries, mushrooms,
- Hiking, walking and running on trails
- Swimming
- Wildlife/bird watching

## WESTERN SANDS REGION

The diverse landscape of the Western Sands Region provides outdoor recreation for those looking for a mix of developed recreation facilities. Much of what recreationists look for can all be found here—regional trail networks for various forms of trail use, large properties for migratory bird and big game hunting, state and county park properties with camping, picnic areas and hiking trails, as well as waterways for boating and canoe/kayak use.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, many needs were expressed by the nearly 1,000 public input participants. The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Western Sands Region. A brief summary is provided here.

# STATE PARKS, FORESTS AND RECREATION AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create
  new destinations. These trails could provide single-track, constructed trails of varying difficulties (including
  potentially skills areas).
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded.
- **Equestrian trails** that either connect a network and/or are loop trails contained wholly in the property.
- Developed camping, including adding electrified sites to significant portions of campgrounds.
- Primitive camping to serve long-distance trail users and/or isolated sites in larger properties for wilderness-type camping for hunting, hiking and canoeing/kayaking.
- **Picnic areas** and **wildlife viewing areas** could be developed to meet the demand of day-users.
- Walk-in access to waterways for canoe/kayak users could be developed.

### STATE TRAILS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded on existing trails.
- **Primitive camping** to enable trail users to take multi-day trips.
- Picnic areas could be developed or expanded at trailhead areas.

## STATE WILDLIFE AND FISHERY AREAS

- Hiking/walking/running loop trails of varying lengths.
- Mountain biking trails that expand existing opportunities and create new
  destinations. These trails could provide single-track, constructed trails of varying
  difficulties (including potentially skills areas).
- **Equestrian trails** that either connect a network and/or are loop trails contained wholly in the property.
- Cross-country ski trails could be established and/or expanded on existing trails.
- **Primitive camping** to serve long-distance trail users and/or isolated sites in larger properties for wilderness-type camping for hunting, hiking and canoeing/kayaking.
- Picnic areas and wildlife viewing areas could be developed to meet the demand of day-users.
- Walk-in access to waterways for canoe/kayak users could be developed.



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Camping—rustic/quiet campgrounds.
- · Horseback riding trails

- Bicycling surfaced trails
- Bicycling mountain biking, single track
- Camping tent
- Camping RV/pop-up
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Hiking, walking, and running on trails
- Swimming
- Wildlife/bird watching

## LOWER LAKE MICHIGAN COASTAL REGION

With an assortment of public conservation lands, the largest being the Kettle Moraine State Forest, the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region is a frequently visited recreation destination, largely due to its proximity to urban centers such as Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago.

Although the region is rich in current opportunities, several needs were expressed by the 1,700 public input participants. The department believes there are opportunities to meet some of the desired recreational experiences on some of the properties it manages in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region. A brief summary is provided here.

### STATE PARKS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to urban areas would likely be most popular.
- **Paved bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking to the existing urban trail network and to campgrounds.
- **Primitive camping** to connect visitors to the myriad of lakes and rivers in the region.
- **Picnicking areas** for visitors to gather, recharge and enjoy a day in the park.

## STATE TRAILS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to urban areas would likely be most popular.
- **Paved bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking to the existing urban trail network and to campgrounds.
- **Cross-country skiing** to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.

### STATE FORESTS

- **Paved bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Mountain biking trails** that expand existing opportunities and create new destinations. These trails could be single-track, constructed trails of varying difficulties (potentially including skills areas).
- Cross-country skiing to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.
- Canoeing and kayaking with improved walk-in trails to access waterbodies.
- Lake fishing opportunities with improved boat access and disabled accessible fishing sites.

### State Wildlife and Fishery Areas

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths. Properties in proximity to cities and villages likely would be most popular.
- **Cross-country skiing** to allow visitors to continue their trail adventures through the winter.
- Canoeing and kayaking with improved walk-in trails to access waterbodies.
- Lake fishing opportunities with improved boat access and disabled accessible fishing sites.

#### Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds
- Public shore access to lakes and streams

- Bicycling surfaced trails
- Bicycling mountain biking, single track
- Camping tent
- · Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Fishing from shore
- Hiking, walking and running on trails
- Swimming
- Wildlife/bird watching

# SOUTHERN GATEWAYS REGION

Home to the state's most popular park, Devil's Lake State Park, the Southern Gateways Region well known for a variety of recreational opportunities. Concentrated urban centers have driven demand for recreational opportunities, including the prominent demand for both motorized and non-motorized trails in the area.

The department believes there are opportunities to meet many of the recreational experiences desired by the 3,700 public input on some of the properties it manages in the Southern Gateways Region. A brief summary is provided here.

### STATE PARKS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Mountain biking** to expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- Canoeing/kayaking with improved walk-in trails and access to waterbodies.
- Lake fishing from shore or pier, by adding **improved boat access sites** such as ramps for trailered boats.
- Swimming in lakes and rivers that are accommodated by beaches, changing rooms and other amenities.
- **Primitive camping** to allow visitors to take a break from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

# STATE TRAILS

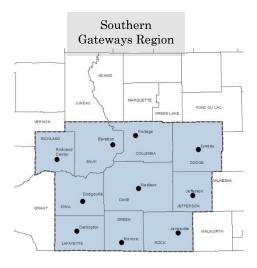
- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- Mountain biking to expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- **Developed camping**, including adding electrified sites.
- **Primitive camping** to allow visitors to take a break on their trail adventures.

### STATE RECREATION AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- A future motorized recreation area is being sought to accommodate various motorized recreation, including ATV/UTV riding, off-highway motorcycling and four-wheel drive vehicle riding.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- **Mountain biking** to expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- Canoeing/kayaking with improved walk-in trails and access to waterbodies.
- Improved boat access sites such as ramps for trailered boats for motorboating and lake fishing.
- **Primitive camping** to allow visitors to get away from the urban noise.

# STATE WILDLIFE AREAS

- **Hiking/walking/running loop trails** of varying lengths.
- **Surfaced bicycle trails** that expand the existing network linking cities and villages and campgrounds.
- Mountain biking to expand existing opportunities and create new destinations.
- Canoeing/kayaking with improved walk-in trails and access to waterbodies.
- Improved **boat access sites** such as ramps for trailered boats for motorboating and lake fishing.
- Swimming in lakes and rivers that are accommodated by beaches, changing rooms and other amenities.
- **Primitive camping** to allow visitors to make hunting and fishing trips more adventurous.



A number and diversity of recreation needs were identified by the public, including:

- Trails for motorized recreation
- Hiking/walking/running trails
- Bicycle trails both paved and natural surface
- Camping rustic/quiet campgrounds

- ATV/UTV Riding
- Bicycling surfaced trails
- Bicycling mountain biking, single track
- Camping tent
- Canoeing/kayaking
- Cross-country skiing/snowshoeing
- Fishing from a boat, canoe or kayak
- Fishing from shore
- Hiking, walking and running on trails
- Swimming
- Snowmobiling